



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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1/26/82

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MEMORANDUM TO THE FILES

January 26, 1982

FROM: POL - Townsend B. Friedman ✓
SUBJECT: Follow-Up on Rodriguez Disappearance
REF: Friedman Memorandum to the Files, January 22

Mrs. Rodriguez came by the Embassy again today, at my request.

First, I asked her about the report in the papers of an unidentified young man's body being discovered in the La Plata-Avellaneda region. Much to my relief, she said she has read the report and had immediately gone to the morgue. It was not her son.

Second, she said the Federal Police have twice interviewed her extensively about her son. First on January 22 and then again today. They have also called in the man who owned the taxi her son was driving at the time he disappeared. She said that they appear to be really investigating her son's disappearance for the first time. They also were quite upset that she had approached the Embassy for help. She told them that as a mother she had the right to seek help wherever she thinks it might be found. She also questioned the police whether they could find her son if he is being held by the Army. They assured her they could.

Third, I asked her whether she has gone to human rights organizations. She said no. She asked what I thought they could offer. I said that involving human rights organizations or not was her decision. I could give

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full
☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to ☐
Declassify on Reason

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her the pros and cons but she would have to decide. I then said that they could give her legal help and publicity. I also said that it appears the police are investigating the matter now and that if they were upset about the Embassy's involvement, they would be even madder about human rights organizations getting involved. On the other hand, there are those who think that publicity is very effective in these matters and in the past I thought it sometimes had been helpful. I asked her what she wanted to do. She said that for the time being she did not want to involve human rights organizations.

Fourth, I questioned her very closely about whether her son was involved in any way politically. She stoutly denied that he had any such involvement. She said she is mystified why he disappeared. Moreover, from her comments, it would seem that she does not rule out the possibility that he was a victim of common criminals.

Fifth, Mrs. Rodriguez repeated to me her feeling that the lawyer made up the charge that well informed sources state her son was under detention. She said the police asked her where the lawyer got that information. I had asked Mrs. Rodriguez to check this with the lawyer when I phoned and asked her to come by. She said that she had been unable to see the lawyer before our appointment. She clearly does not believe there is much to the lawyer's allegation which she called a "stupidity."

Comment: The police involvement in this affair is the result of our initiative last week. Nothing had been done by the police about this case until we stepped in. It is a hopeful sign. I think they are probably looking closely into the matter. The working level police annoyance at our involvement was also reflected much further up the line when the police were informed about our initiative -- or so I am reliably told.

It is impossible at this point to say what happened to Daniel Rodriguez. People do disappear in large cities -- and he may have simply been the victim of a common crime. Or he may have been arrested by mistake, been beaten and died. Or...who knows. But if Mrs. Rodriguez's avowals that her son was apolitical are true, it does not seem that he fell afoul of patterned government

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violence -- the tactic of disappearance -- in dealing with terrorists.

At this point, too, I think the GOA is investigating this matter, trying to clear it up. I think we should follow Mrs. Rodriguez's wishes in this matter to the letter. She said as we were taking our leave that she wanted to let things run on as they are for a while. I asked her to keep me informed of what happens. For the time being, I will wait for her to call.

The Rodriguez case raises a broader question --- that of the relationship of this Embassy to disappearances in Argentina. In years past, it was necessary to assume a disappearance was probably the result of action by the security forces. Today that assumption is no longer valid -- disappearances are few and far between. We had one temporary one in January, the result of very unusual circumstances. And the human rights organizations are sure that the temporary disappearance in December was a classic security force operation, the victim being brought back only by their publicity. I don't know if they are right or not. But I am sure in the course of the last twelve months ordinary disappearances -- from crimes, runaways, suicides and the like -- far exceed one or two "security disappearances." Is this Embassy going to continue to involve itself in "disappearances" as it did in the past? I am pleased that our intervention has caused the police to go out and look for Mr. Rodriguez. But if he was the victim of mishap or crime rather than the security forces, I wonder if our involvement has a solid justification. I don't know the answer to this problem but do feel that we must guard against becoming a bureau of missing persons, somehow.

cc: Ambassador
DCM
ARA/SC
HA/HR

Drafted: POL: TBFriedman: gbm
1/26/82
Cleared: POLCOUNS: JFKing *[Signature]*

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